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ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

Guidelines for the field visits of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board

Note by the secretariat

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its first regular session 1995, the Executive Board considered new arrangements for future field visits. The Board took note of the draft revised terms of reference for field visits contained in document DP/1995/5 and the comments made thereon and decided to review further the terms of reference for field visits at its second regular session 1995.

2. On the basis of the comments made during the first regular session, and during meetings of the Bureau and at an informal meeting of interested delegations held in February 1995, the draft terms of reference were further revised and were called guidelines for the field visits of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board.

II. GUIDELINES FOR THE FIELD VISITS OF THE UNDP/UNFPA EXECUTIVE BOARD

3. The present guidelines will be used as a general frame of reference to be applied in a flexible manner for the preparation of the work programme for the field visits, taking into account the particular feature of the programmes in the countries to be visited.

A. Purpose of Visits

4. The visits shall be working missions of the Executive Board with the objectives of: (a) providing direct field contact and information for Board members; (b) broadening understanding of field activities; and (c) affording insight into the implementation of UNDP/UNFPA overall policies and strategies. Issues to be covered may be some of the following areas:

(a) Process of preparing country programmes, designir., projects and organizing mid-term reviews;

(b) National execution/national capacity-building;

(c) Fluidity and effectiveness of communication between the field office and the national cooperation authorities;

(d) Relative strengths (comparative advantages), impact and sustainability;

(e) Evaluations and internalization by UNDP and UNFPA of lessons learned;

(f) Decentralization;

(g) United Nations system coordination;

(h) Relevance of Executive Board work and decisions;

(i) Technical cooperation among developing countries;

(j) Global Environment Facility and Capacity 21;

(k) Other thematic issues, based on the needs and priorities of the countries visited.

5. The Resident Representative shall have the opportunity to suggest additional issues.

6. The team shall visit a representative sample of project/programme interventions. Visits to projects outside the capital will be strongly encouraged. Among the projects visited in any one field visit, efforts will be made to ensure adequate coverage of both UNDP and UNFPA projects and to focus on projects that stand out in terms of their modality, impact or resource allocation. As far as possible, visits to projects of other funds administered by UNDP will also be undertaken.

B. Mission contacts

7. Within the focus established for the field visit, the mission shall meet with a selection of the following representatives:

(a) UNDP and UNFPA field staff at various levels, including a separate meeting with the administrative officer/office manager;

(b) Project directors and technical advisers;

(c) Representatives of United Nations specialized agencies and of international/regional finance institutions;

(d) Government ministries responsible for aid coordination, finance, development, and planning as well as relevant sectoral ministries;

(e) Other partners (bilateral aid agencies, non-governmental organizations, etc).

8. Sufficient time shall be allocated for these meetings in order to encourage a thorough dialogue. The clustering of meetings may be considered.

9. Some of these meetings may be held without UNDP/UNFPA officials present, according to the wishes of the team.

10. In order to concentrate on substantive issues, courtesy and protocol visits shall be kept to a minimum. The Secretariat will emphasize this aspect to the team members and the Resident Representatives concerned in the preparations for the visits.

C. Participation

11. The teams shall normally include up to ten team members. Participants will be expected to have a basic knowledge and experience of the Executive Board's work and be actively involved in the ongoing Board discussions.

12. Participation in the field visits shall be based on the principle of equitable regional participation and equal access to the facility of field exposure to as many Executive Board members as possible. The Bureau of the Executive Board shall be responsible for undertaking special efforts to ensure flexible rotation among the potential candidates interested in participating in the field visits.

13. In order to avoid overlapping of events, the field visits shall take place, to the extent possible, one month prior to the sessions of the Executive Board.

14. One experienced UNDP/UNFPA headquarters staff member, may, as appropriate, accompany the team in order to provide general information helpful to the participants' general comprehension and to facilitate organizational and logistical aspects of the visits.

D. Selection of countries, timing and length of visits

15. The countries to be visited and the timing shall be selected by UNDP in consultation with UNFPA with the prior agreement of the countries concerned, and shall be approved by the Bureau of the Executive Board. The dates of each visit will be announced with sufficient notice to the members of the Board through the members of the Bureau. The Bureau will select the team members sufficiently in advance to enable the team to establish initial contacts among themselves and decide upon the focus of their visit. Normally, the team will spend up to ten days in the field if only one country is being visited, and two weeks if two countries are being visited, including the time needed for the preparation of the report.

E. Preparations and Communications

16. Travel information (e.g., visa requirements and travel itinerary) shall be made available at least four weeks in advance to the participants by UNDP headquarters.

17. UNDP and UNFPA headquarters shall jointly provide to the participants readily available background information from various sources on the countries to be visited (e.g., Socio-economic Monetary and Resource Tables (S.M.A.R.T.) Profiles, statistical information, the synthesis of findings of past field visits as contained in document DP/1993/66, etc.). A copy of these terms of reference will also be made available to team members.

18. A draft schedule of work shall be made available by UNDP to the participants at least four weeks before the beginning of the field visit. There shall be a balance between mission contacts and project visits. Comments and proposals for changes, if any, will be communicated to the field

in time for revisions to be made and provided to the team members before their departure for the field visit. This will facilitate any further revision required.

19. Upon arrival of the team in the respective countries, the field office shall hand over further material, consisting of the confirmed country schedule for the visit, a country programme background paper, donor profiles, a detailed list of projects with allocation of resources, and a brief issues paper. Rescheduling of the itinerary shall be kept to a minimum and undertaken in full consultation with the team members.

20. Every effort shall be made to ensure that the team arrives in the country at least 24 hours before starting its programme of work in order to prepare adequately for the work in the field, given the fact that many documents are received by the team upon its arrival and that some participants come directly from capitals and have not participated in the briefing session at headquarters.

F. Reporting

21. In order to share their findings and experiences in the Executive Board, the participants shall write a brief informal report, engaging only the members of the team. The report will aim at stimulating the discussions of the Executive Board, with a view to enhancing its contributions for increased effectiveness and efficiency by UNDP and UNFPA.

22. The reports shall focus on no more than four main topics, which serve to illustrate wider programme issues. Pursuant to Executive Board decision 94/4 on the format of reports, field visit reports shall not normally exceed three pages with a limit of eight pages in exceptional circumstances.

23. During the visit, appropriate time shall be allocated and organizational arrangements made for the joint preparation of the report. All efforts will be made to complete the report before the end of the visit so that it may be presented at the regular session of the Executive Board immediately following the completion of the visit.

III. EXECUTIVE BOARD ACTION

24. The Executive Board may wish to:

Adopt the guidelines for field visits as contained in the present document.